

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 070718
ORIGIN AF-08

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DRAFTED BY AF/C:GHAMILTON:JR
APPROVED BY AF-TUSEELYE
AF/P -BARUSSELL
S/PRSJTRATNER
AF/C:TRBUCHANAN

-----310220Z 073660 /54

O 302358Z MAR 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 070718

FOR AMBASSADOR AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY SCHAUFELLE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, CG

SUBJECT: PRESS RELATIONS

REF: KINSHASA 2844; STATE 070141

1. DEPARTMENT APPRECIATES VIEWS EXPRESSED REFTEL BY
EMBASSY KINSHASA SUGGESTING THAT DEPARTMENT AVOID OFFICIAL
CONFIRMATION OF MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN
ZAIRE. WE TOO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE OVERALL QUESTION
OF HANDLING PRESS INQUIRIES ABOUT A VOLATILE AND FAST-
CHANGING ISSUE. PAUCITY OF HARD INFORMATION IS A
VERITY, BUT DOES NOT SELL WELL TO A PRESS CORPS BECOMING
INCREASINGLY ATTUNED TO THE PROBLEMS POSED BY THE
SHABA INVASION TO US POLICY AND THE MOBUTU GOVERNMENT.

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2. IN THE PARTICULAR CASE OF THE MUTSHATSHA INCIDENT,
DEPARTMENT DECIDED TO CONFIRM FALL OF MUTSHATSHA WHICH
HAD BEEN BILLED IN PREVIOUS DAYS AS AN IMPORTANT
GOVERNMENT POSITION IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A BALANCED
APPROACH, DESPITE THE FACT THAT DEPT HAS TRIED TO AVOID
GIVING SITREPS OF A MILITARY NATURE. (FYI: VOA SAYS
IT DID NOT REPORT STATE DEPT CONFIRMATION OF MUTSHATSHA'S

FALL).

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3. WE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO KEEP "SITREPS" FOR THE PRESS TO A MINIMUM. AS NOTED IN STATE 70141, HOWEVER, THERE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE TIMES WHEN NEED TO DEMONSTRATE CREDIBILITY WITH U.S. PRESS AND PUBLIC WILL TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER ZAIRIAN SENSITIVITIES, BUT WE WILL TRY TO KEEP THESE INSTANCES TO MINIMUM. DEPARTMENT BELIEVES THAT CONFIRMATION OF MILITARY SITUATIONS MIGHT BEST BE HANDLED IN WASHINGTON ON BACKGROUND BASIS, WHICH WILL LEAVE EMBASSY IN AS GOOD RELATION WITH ZAIRIAN GOVERNMENT AS CAN BE OBTAINED.

4. DEPT VALUES HIGHLY THE EMBASSY'S EXCELLENT SUGGESTIONS FOR PRESS GUIDANCE. PLEASE BEAR IN MIND TRANSMISSION TIME IN ORDER THAT THEY ARRIVE IN DEPT WITH SUFFICIENT LEAD TIME TO BE WORKED INTO PRESS BRIEFING PAPERS.
CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

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